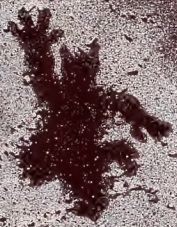
ISSN 0712-7774

$2.00 USA ● $2.50 CANADA ● £1 UK

CEREBUS

WALKING ON THE MOON



107
FEB

NOTE • FROM • THE NATIONAL ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVE

(Diamond Comics Distributors)

Dear Dave:

The purpose of this correspondence is to discuss with you the recent developments regarding the proposed second printing of the trade paperback "High Society".

When High Society was first announced, we were very upset that you chose not to use credit-worthy distributors to handle this **PRODUCT***.

After selling 6,000 copies of High Society to consumers and retailers directly, you solicited orders from distributors for a second printing. As you know, Diamond decided to solicit for this second printing, even though we felt we should have been offered the first printing. Although we disagreed with your handling of this **PRODUCT***, we wanted to show you we supported you and your entire line.

Diamond Comic Distributors has long supported Aardvark-Vanaheim on **Cerebus, Puma Blues, Ms. Tree, Flaming Carrot, Swords of Cerebus, Journey, Neil the Horse, Normalman, Files of Ms. Tree, Black Zeppelin,** as well as the second printing of High Society.

As you are aware, Diamond ordered 2,380 copies of High Society on purchase order #12028. Our cost on this order was $16,660.00, which represents a very large sale and profit center for both Aardvark-Vanaheim and Diamond.

After all our efforts, we were surprised to receive a form letter on October 9, 1987, stating that "Because of low advance orders High Society (2nd printing) the decision has been made to distribute these books by direct mail, as opposed to the regular distribution channels."

Our surprise turned to shock when we read your "Note from the President" in Cerebus #104. A copy of this "note" is enclosed. (Including my abhorrence of the term "product" — Dave.)

Dave, you indicated in an earlier conversation that you wanted to print 6,000 copies of the second printing of High Society. Based on that, how can Karen possibly state you received "low advance orders" when Diamond, alone, sold over one-third of that entire print run? In my conversation with Karen when last we spoke, she told me Diamond was one of your "best distributors and the most financially strong based on years of prompt payments." Karen also stated that "dealing with Denise Gosselin in our Order Processing Department is really nice, as Denise works with Aardvark-Vanaheim with total professionalism and integrity."

Karen went on to explain that because other distributors consistently pay you late, or not at all, you weren't going to make High Society available to any distributor, even though Diamond "always pays on time".

Dave, we feel betrayed! We strongly feel we should not be unjustly penalized for the unbusinesslike behavior and practices of others. After careful and considerable thought on this subject and review with Steve Geppi, President of Diamond and Charles Parker, Vice-President, it is agreed that we must respond, in kind, to your actions. If it is your intention to pick and choose which **PRODUCT***s you want distributors to carry, it should be our privilege to choose what we wish to distribute. Therefore, it is our feeling we should no longer carry and promote Puma Blues.

Dave, it is our sincere desire to carry your entire line of **PRODUCT***s. We **do not** wish to exclude Puma Blues, High Society or any other **PRODUCT***. Therefore, please contact us so we can come to a mutually beneficial solution to our dilemma.

We look forward to your favorable response and to working with you in the future.

Very truly yours,

William D. Schanes

* (Caps mine — Dave)

CEREBUS

No. 107 FEBRUARY 1988

DAVE SIM
President

KAREN McKIEL
Administrator

GERHARD
Backgrounds, cover-colour, and tones.

Circulation
28,200

Distributors
Andromeda Publications
2113 Dundas Street West
Toronto, Ontario M6R 1X1

Bud Plant Inc.
P.O. Box 1886
Grass Valley, CA 95945

Capital City Distributors
2827 Perry Street
Madison, WI., 53713

Comex Distributors
10561-111 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5H 3E8

Diamond Distributors
1720 Belmont Avenue
Baltimore, MD., 21207

Multi-Book Periodical
4128 South Service Road
Burlington, Ontario L7L 4X5

Neptune Comics
197-28th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11232

Now & Then Books
90 Queen Street South
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 1V9

Second Genesis
1112 N. E. 21st St.
Portland, OR., 97232

Styx Comic Service
1858 Arlington Street,
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2X 1W6

Titan Distributors
P.O. Box 250
London, E3 4RT
England

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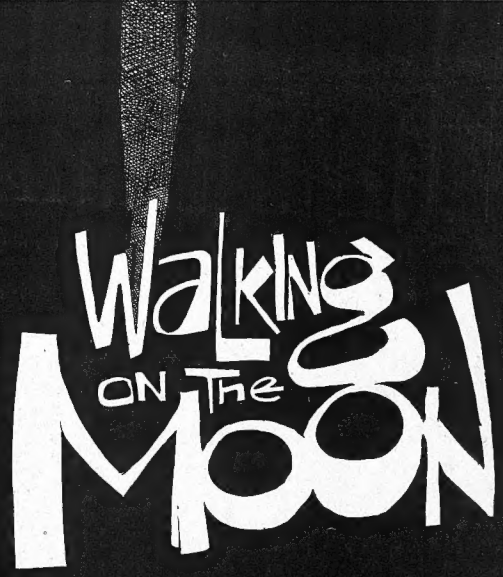
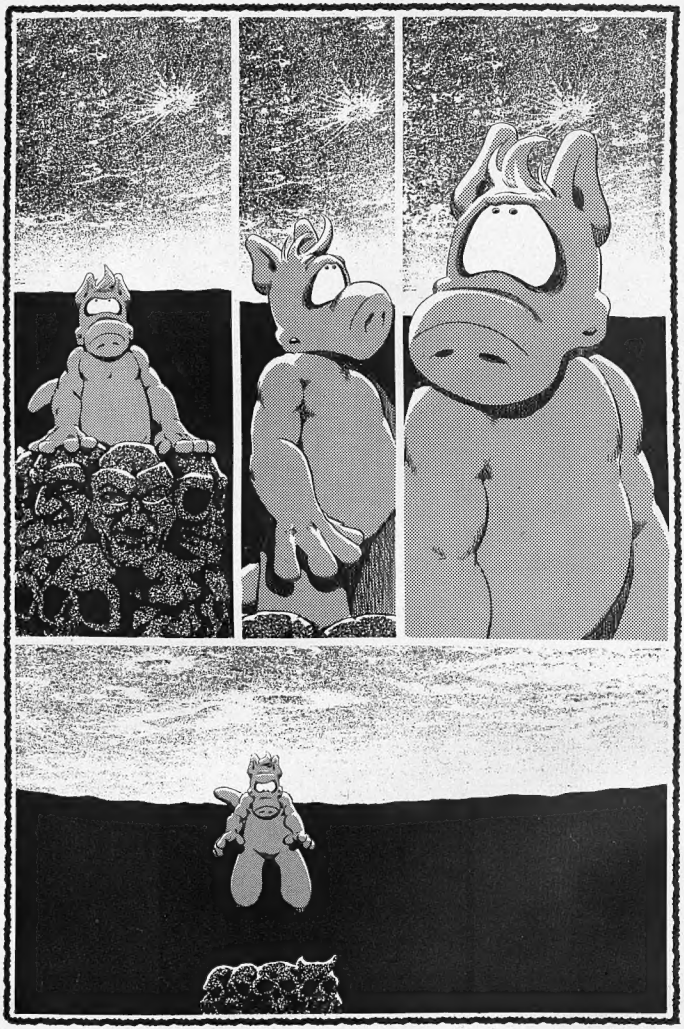
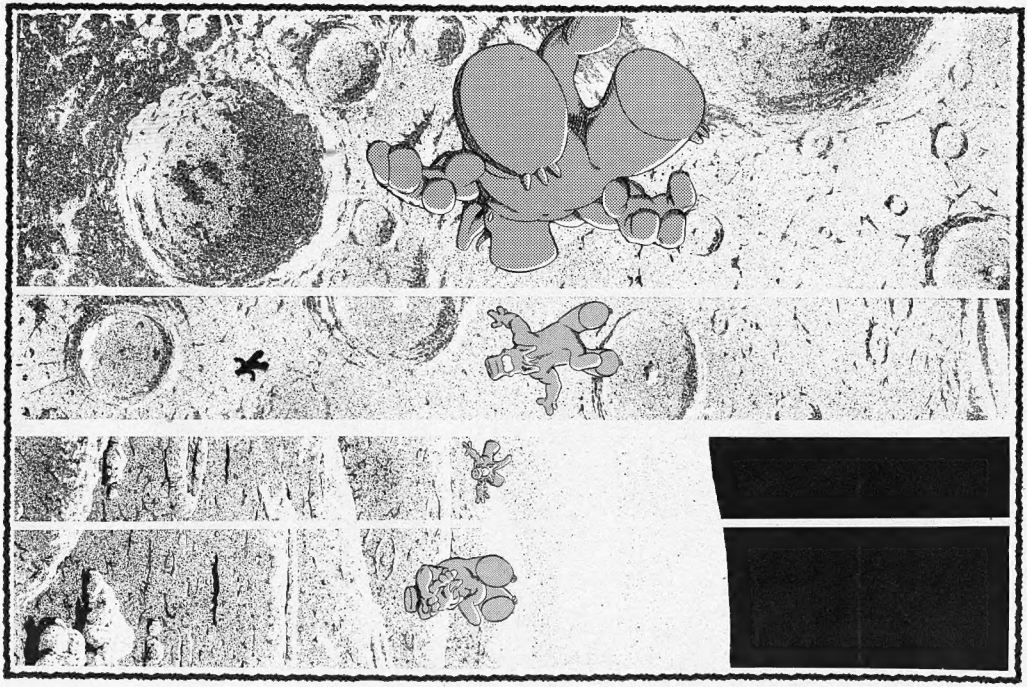
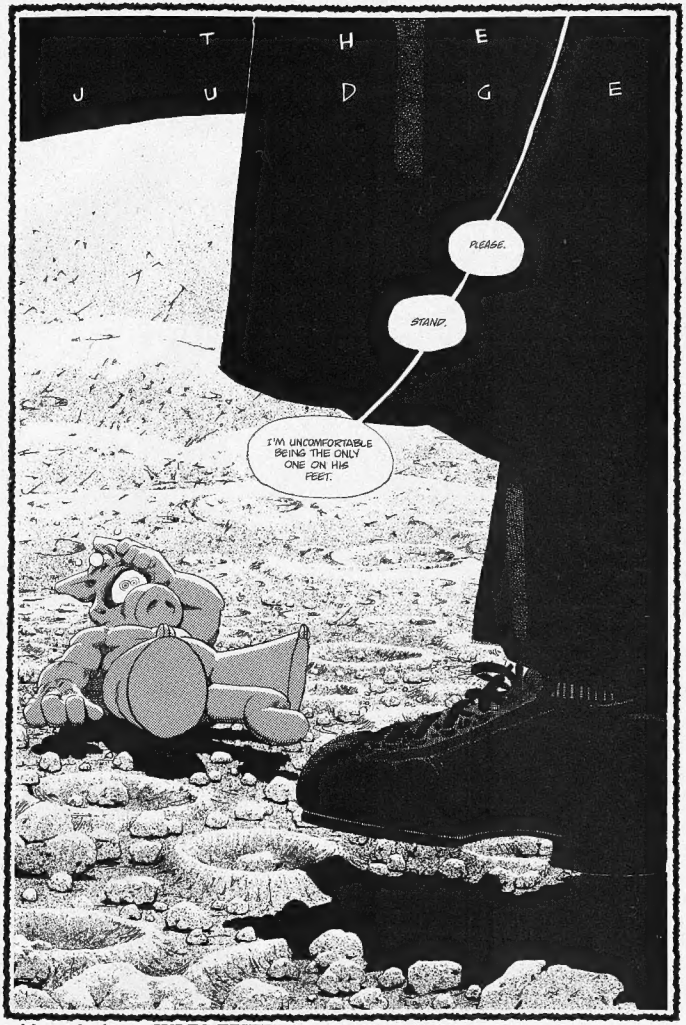


SEVEN







with apologies to JULES FEIFFER and LOU JACOBI

SO,
CEREBUS THE AARDVARK
FIRST MARRIED POPE IN HISTORY
FIRST DIVORCED POPE IN HISTORY
FIRST INDIVIDUAL I'VE EVER SPOKEN TO IN ALL OF THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS I'VE BEEN HERE--
SIGH
YOU'LL FORGIVE ME IF I'M A LITTLE DISAPPOINTED

MYSELF
I WAS PULLING FOR WEISSHAUPT.
IN ANSWER TO YOUR UNSPOKEN QUESTION:
NO.
I'M NOT TARIM.

I'VE HAD A LOT OF NAMES OVER THE YEARS ...
THE MAN IN THE MOON ...
THE WATCHER.
WHEN I WAS YOUNGER I WAS KNOWN AS GEORGE ...
WHY?
WHEN YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE...
... WHY NOT?

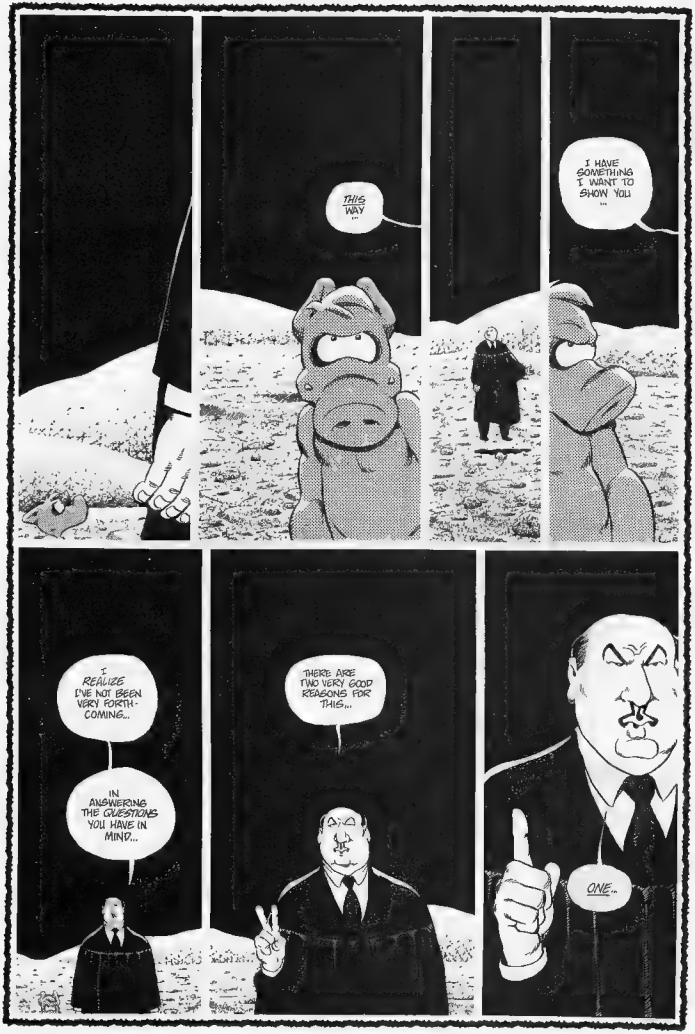
I NEITHER EAT NOR SLEEP NOR DREAM...
I'VE NEVER CRIED
AND I'VE NEVER LAUGHED...
I DO ONLY WHAT I WAS PLACED HERE TO DO
OBSERVE...
...AND JUDGE.
MIND YOU I'M NOT COMPLAINING
WITH SO MUCH UNEMPLOYMENT A MAN HAS TO BE GRATEFUL THAT HE HAS ANY JOB AT ALL.

I HAVE PERFECT SIGHT
PERFECT HEARING
AND TOTAL RECALL
I SEE EVERYTHING EVERYONE DOES
I HEAR EVERYTHING EVERYONE SAYS
AND I NEVER FORGET
OVER THE HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS ...
CERTAIN PATTERNS HAVE EMERGED
FOR INSTANCE ...
EACH TIME THAT LIFE HAS DRAGGED ITSELF FROM THE RUBBLE OF LIFE'S PREVIOUS INCARNATION
EACH TIME
THAT LIFE HAS REDISCOVERED LANGUAGE. LIFE'S FIRST WORDS HAVE BEEN THE SAME...

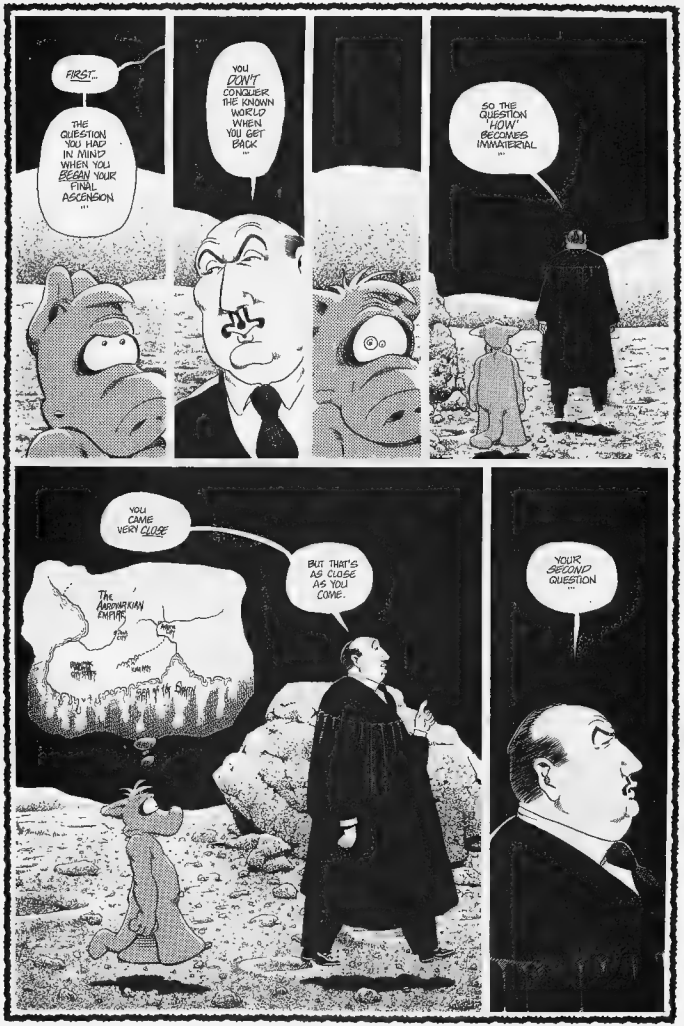
"GIVE ME"
WEISSHAUPT WOULD HAVE LOVED THAT PART
WHETHER YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE GREAT DINOSAUR CIVILISATIONS, WIPED OUT WHEN THEY INVENTED A HAIRSPRAY THAT REDUCED THE PURE OXYGEN CONTENT OF THE AIR BY HALF...
OR THE GIANT WALKING REDWOODS WHO CREATED THE ATMOSPHERE OF PURE OXYGEN IN THE FIRST PLACE WHEN THEY EXPLODED THE FIRST SODIUM CHLORIDE BOMB
IT'S BEEN ONE THING AFTER ANOTHER

BELIEVE ME...
I'VE SEEN IT ALL...
EVERY TWELVE THOUSAND YEARS OR SO...
THANKS TO THE SODIUM CHLORIDE BOMB'S FALLOUT
IT RAINS HARD ENOUGH
AND LONG ENOUGH
TO RAISE THE SURFACES OF ALL THE OCEANS
AND THE ENTIRE WORLD IS CINGRED IN WATER...
THIS PHENOMENON IS KNOWN
ALMOST INVARIABLY
AS THE GREAT FLOOD...
ONLY THE REDWOODS
FROZEN INTO NEAR IMMOBILITY BY THE REDUCED AMOUNTS OF CARBON DIOXIDE IN THE AIR
SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH TO CALL IT BY ANOTHER NAME
WHICH ...
ROUGHLY TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL REDWOODESE
MEANS "OH NO" ...
"NOT THIS AGAIN."

WHEN THE WATERS RECEDE...
THE SURVIVING MEMBERS OF WHATEVER SOCIETY IS AROUND AT THE TIME...
TURN TO THEIR RELIGIOUS LEADERS FOR AN EXPLANATION
NOT THE WISEST OF MOVES...
THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS TELL THEM THAT...
AS LONG AS THEY NEVER HAVE FUN...
JARIM WILL NEVER MAKE IT RAIN THAT HARD AGAIN...
SO...
FOR A HUNDRED YEARS...
I GET TO WATCH...
AND LISTEN TO...
A WORLD FULL OF PEOPLE, ALL ACTING LIKE PRIESTS...
YOU CAN TRUST ME WHEN I TELL YOU...
IT ADDS A WHOLE NEW DIMENSION TO THE WORD 'BORING'...

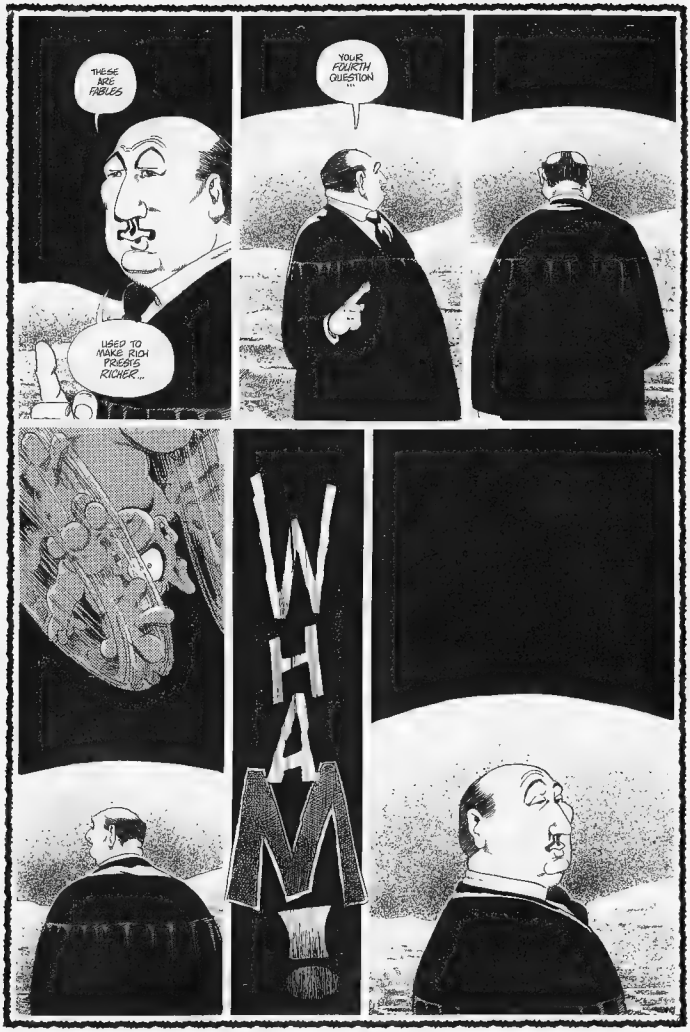

THIS WAY...
I HAVE SOMETHING I WANT TO SHOW YOU...
I REALIZE I'VE NOT BEEN VERY FORTHCOMING...
IN ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS YOU HAVE IN MIND...
THERE ARE TWO VERY GOOD REASONS FOR THIS...
ONE...

YOUR QUESTIONS ARE EASILY ANSWERED
TWO.
YOUR QUESTIONS DON'T PERTAIN TO ANYTHING MEANINGFUL.
HOWEVER..
IN THE INTEREST OF MAINTAINING YOUR LIMITED SPAN OF ATTENTION
I'LL ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS NOW
AFTERWARD.
...I'LL RETURN TO THE MEANINGFUL ISSUES AT HAND.


FIRST...
THE QUESTION YOU HAD IN MIND WHEN YOU BEGAN YOUR FINAL ASCENSION ...
YOU DON'T CONQUER THE KNOWN WORLD WHEN YOU GET BACK ...
SO THE QUESTION 'HOW' BECOMES IMMATERIAL ...
YOU CAME VERY CLOSE
BUT THAT'S AS CLOSE AS YOU COME.
THE ANSHARIAN EMPIRE
YOUR SECOND QUESTION ...

FRED.
ETHEL
AND THE LITTLE FELLOW WITH THE HAIR...
DRIFT IN THE HARD VACUUM OF SPACE FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS UNTIL THEY RE-ENTER EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD...
THEY ARE DRAWN INTO THE ATMOSPHERE, ACCELERATING FASTER AND FASTER, UNTIL THEY BURN UP FROM THE FRICTION AND FALL, AS A LIGHT SPRINKLING OF ASH, OVER AN AREA OF SEVERAL HUNDRED SQUARE MILES
A NOT-ALTOGETHER INAPPROPRIATE FATE FOR SOMEONE ATTEMPTING TO MERGE A MALE AND A FEMALE MESSIAH INTO ONE...
BUT...
I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF...
YOUR THIRD QUESTION...

NO.
THIS IS NOT VANAHEIM...
ONE GOOD LOOK AROUND SHOULD TELL YOU THAT
THIS
FOR THE MOST PART
IS A DEAD
AND NEARLY AIRLESS HUNK OF ROCK
WHICH REVOLVES AROUND THE EARTH EVERY TWENTY-EIGHT DAYS OR SO
..VANAHEIM...
...HEAVEN...
VALHALLA...


THESE ARE FABLES
USED TO MAKE RICH PRESTS RICHER...
YOUR FOURTH QUESTION ...
WHAM

IF I HAD WANTED YOU TO BOUNCE...
I WOULD HAVE SAID 'BOUNCE'.
..PLEASE..
JUST WALK.
HIS FOURTH QUESTION

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THE PRESIDENT'S REPLY

This is my fifth ***written*** *attempt to reply to Diamond Comics' extortion letter. For the past week I have been fuming about it. I would try and tell myself to ignore it (which is probably* ***still*** *the best idea all around); however I would find that I couldn't write a line of dialogue for this issue without the sheer gall of this communication (and all of the other injustices over the years perpetrated in comic books by the business community against individual members of the creative community) overwhelming all other thoughts.*

Please. Don't take that lightly. It's important to me that you all understand.

I have been labouring for four and a half years on this story-line, the idea for which came to me eight years ago. My whole life has been consumed, since 1983, with arriving at BOOK SEVEN "Walking on the Moon". I had taken two weeks off over Christmas and New Year's, gradually psyching myself to the point where I was like a bull pawing at the turf . . . ready to transcribe the last five issues of my twelve hundred page story. Encouraged beyond measure by the fulsome praise of Jerry Siegel and Michael Moorcock in recent communications, feeling, at last, that I would be able to live up to a potential I have always felt I had . . . feeling that I would at last hit a high-water mark in my creativity . . . feeling that I would write something that I would have no need to apologize for or deprecate in years to come.

I can only hope that putting this down on paper is going to excorcise a number of demons that are keeping me from this task. I'm afraid it won't. And I know I won't write this issue until I can focus ***all*** *of my attention and energies on it. To do any less would be to give up on the promise it represents to myself and my abilities.*

After I finish writing this, I'm going away for a few days. By then, I hope my anger, my rage, my interior scream of pain on behalf of my profession has diminished enough to allow creativity to return to my thoughts.

I really do.

****

Dear Bill.

I knew six years ago, when I did the SIX DEADLY SINS PORTFOLIO for Schanes and Schanes that I had set a dangerous precedent in my dealings with you. You don't remember, do you, Bill? I had agreed as part of the contract (the last contract I **have** ever or **will** ever sign) to sign and number seventeen hundred and fifty plates. The idea was that you would send the plates to Kitchener and I would sign them over a period of several days.

Then you found out I was going to attend the San Diego Con that year. The plates never showed up The Con weekend was mere days away and still no plates had showed up. Finally you phoned Deni and asked if I would agree to sign and number the plates while I was there. I refused. This was part business, part holiday for me Our agreement was that I would sign the plates in Kitchener. I had no interest in using part of my holiday to sign plates that were supposed to have arrived weeks before. You whined. You bitched. You threatened. You cajoled. And you won Deni over. Businessman to businesswoman and who gives a shit about the artist. You threatened to tell everyone that I refused to sign the portfolios. You would make me look bad

I capitulated. I thought at the time how dangerous it was to give in to someone who placed business ahead of human beings, but in the interest of peace (both business and marital) I agreed.

I got off a plane in San Diego in late afternoon, was instantly shepherded to a hotel room where I signed and numbered, through my jet-lag, until four o'clock in the morning (seven o'clock by my internal clock). The promised dinner turned into a cold hot-turkey sandwich at Denny's-(no, the irony wasn't lost on me).

I know you don't remember because that was also the day CAPTAIN VICTORY number one came out, and you and your cronies were, for the most part, oblivious to my presence, rhapsodizing as you were about your assured place in comics history with its publication.

The next morning was the kicker, Bill.

I staggered into the convention after about four hours sleep and starting setting up at the table the convention had provided me. A fan came up as I was rummaging through my pencil case.

"Can you tell me where I can get a copy of The Six Deadly Sins portfolio?"

I smiled a weary smile.

"They've got them downstairs . . . at the Pacific Comics table "

"No, they don't. I asked them and they said you refused to sign the plates."

What about the next day . . . when one of your flunkies finally put down his copy of CAPTAIN VICTORY and assembled a few of the portfolios? Do you remember me coming down to the table, Bill? Do you remember handing me a few loose plates? Do you remember when I asked for one of the portfolio folders and you told me you only had machine-numbered folders at the table and that I **DEFINITELY** couldn't have one of those?

Blame it on the jet lag, Bill.

When you looked the other way, I **stole** one of the numbered portfolio folders . . . the ones you added red and blue to without telling me because "colour'll make 'em sell better."

I hear voices in your letter, Bill. I hear the voice of some gray bureaucrat saying to Jerry and Joe in 1938 "Just sign right here. A formality. Just helps us keep our records straight." I hear the voice of the movie executive who let slip information about the **Elektra** movie in Frank Miller's presence . . . unaware that Frank had created Elektra and that there was a conspiracy to keep him from having any part in the production. It is the voice of Warner Communications telling Alan Moore that **Watchmen** merchandise is strictly promotion and that therefore he is not entitled to royalties from their sale. It is the voice of the same

Beast 666 Fifth Avenue telling Steve Bissette "It was easier in the old days, when we owned everything and we could just say fuck you to the creators."

I hear the voice of First Comics saying to Judith Hunt "Well, dear. It seems we've reached an impasse on how to handle **Evangeline**. Unfortunately for you, you've sold it to us, so either do it our way or get out."

Leaving aside the fact that sixteen thousand dollars is not tempting to me, Bill, old sock, old chum . . . representing as it does the income from an average two week period of phone orders, what you are missing here is that you and I are not motivated by the same things. You, apparently, are motivated by money. I am motivated by my absolute over-riding **need** to write and draw. By my addiction to creativity.

Money is merely an insulation that allows me Freedom (yes, Bill that's a capital "f") to create, without having to spend hours on the phone talking to suits, haircuts and other bureaucratic riff-raff.

Think, Bill. I know it's hard, but **try.**

I keep producing a comic book that is completely and totally uncommercial; that languishes in circulation in the same territory where it falls alphabetically; between **Captain America** and **Conan.** I could sell **way** more than that, Bill. Hundreds of thousands of copies. How? **Cerebus NINJA!** No. 1 (April 1989) Cover and introduction by Frank Miller. Colour by Lynn Varley. But I choose not to.

I know, Bill, I know.

It's so hard for a middle-level management type to understand. After all, you spend your whole life alternately being obsequious and bullying people smaller than yourself for the sake of a paycheque. Along comes a guy who can get a cheque for sixteen thousand dollars just by saying "okay" and it is quite beyond your comprehension why he won't. Why he **can't.**

Some things are worth more than money, Bill (I'm sorry, William . . . I keep forgetting that suits and hair-cuts always use their full names). Between the lines of your letter I see Paul Levitz's smile when I asked him if the counter-proposal he was about to hand me was a good deal or a bad deal.

"Well, that depends on whether you want to buy a new house this year."

Do you see, Bill? No, of course you don't, so I'll try and explain. For five decades this is as high as we have been allowed to aspire. As creators; as the life's blood of the Comics industry. A house in the suburbs. A brand new shiny sports car. But what about the other 9/10ths of income generated by Cerebus at DC? What about the revenues that pay for my "free" dinners in New York on Dick Giordano's company American Express Gold Card, Bruce Bristow's Gold Card, Peggy May's Gold Card? What about revenues from my character paying for prime Manhattan office space, plush carpets in Jenette Kahn's office? What about **that** money? I know. I know.

I'm a creator.

I'm not entitled to **that** money. That's **company** money. **Business** money.

I wouldn't understand **business.**

I'm just an artist/writer.

The Alan Moore situation scares the living shit out of me. What if I **had** signed the deal with DC and they had produced . . . say . . . a Cerebus stuffed toy that they were selling along with the reprinted comic books. Hundreds and hundreds of the little grey beasties. And what if I phoned and said "Say . . . when do I get my cut of the stuffed toys?" And they said "Gee, Dave, sorry. Those are promotion items. You don't **get** any money from those."

Legal action?

Dave Sim vs. Warner Communications' nine law firms?

Of course I'm **sure** I could count on all of the distributors to boycott the stuffed toys until a settlement was reached, right Bill? Steve? Bud? Milton?

Sure; just like you won't sell any more **Watchmen** products until Alan gets his cut. Just like the shops won't handle any more **Watchmen** products til Alan gets his cut; just like all the fans won't buy anymore **Watchmen** products til Alan gets his cut.

Horse fucking shit.

The day your letter arrived, I was preparing myself to make one final pitch to Steve and John to go for a general-release on **Taboo** instead of mail order like **High Society** . . . in the interests of bringing some semblance of peace to the proceedings. The final decision is theirs (just as **Puma Blues** has not followed **Cerebus'** lead in instituting a price increase because they . . . ha, ha . . . didn't want to upset the distributors), but I felt I could make a persuasive argument in favour of the traditional means of distribution. Now you are threatening to destroy the **Puma Blues,** innocent by-standers, easy prey for bullies, thugs and black-mailers.

When Karen told them that I would not capitulate, they said if I **had** they would've taken Puma Blues to another publisher because they would no longer have any respect for me.

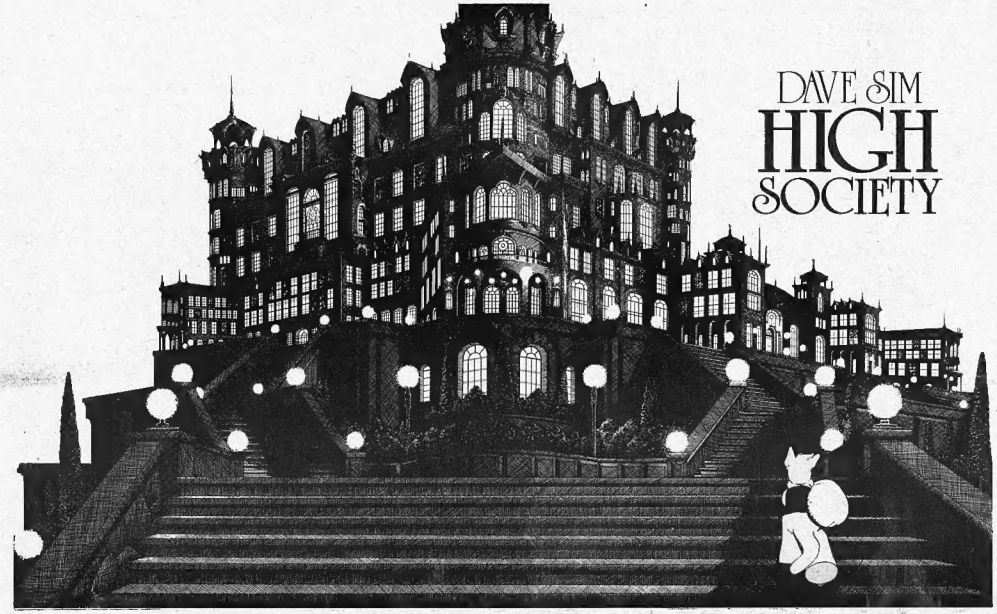
That's something else that's worth more than money, Bill. Courage. Integrity. Ideals.

With allies like Steve and John, Stephen and Michael, we stand four-square against your ugly, gutless tyranny. We shall resist all efforts to break us, to divide us, to diminish or tarnish our ideals and our spirit.

We shall never surrender.

Do your worst.

AVAILABLE NOW



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PHOTOS by GERHARD

WITH ZOLASTRAYA, NEW YEAR'S EVE at ERIC and HELEN'S (Hi, Zee; Hi, Eric; Hi, Helen)